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TAPE 36

Side A, 5 3/8 - 5 1/2

15 JAN 1979

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

[REDACTED]

FROM:

D C I

I need to get that evaluation of the loss of capability

[REDACTED]

85X1T

85X1T

[REDACTED]

In conjunction with that, I would like to know whether the

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[REDACTED]

has ever been operational and what it is going to take to

make it operational today.

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PASSED TO DCI

NIGHT, 15 JAN. 79.

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commitment, if you will."

The ranks of the retired include many who blame Colby for those problems, particularly his handling as director of the sensational CIA scandals in 1975. Colby, an adroit political operator, went public with the agency's embarrassing sins as a way to calm the country and assure it that the ugly past was truly past. Whether Colby's strategy made things better or worse for the agency is still a hot topic among old boys who believe, in any case, that he violated the cardinal rules of "clandestinity," as one of them calls it.

Colby and others take the current distress over security and turn it into another argument in favor of a congressional charter for the CIA, including expanded powers of self-policing. "Until we get a statute passed and have some better discipline over employees, you're not going to solve that problem," Colby said.

This political argument is aimed at the next Congress, which will be asked to approve a new controlling charter for CIA. Many of its partisans are arguing that now is the time to let the agency slide quietly back into something resembling the "deep cover" that is enjoyed for 25 years.

Thomas Powers, author of a forthcoming biography of Helms, suggests there is a kind of psychic revenge involved in all the scary gossip emanating from people who used to pride themselves on total secrecy.

"My own feeling is that it's the intelligence community's way of getting back at the public," Powers said. "It's a way of saying that you've got to leave us alone and let us do it. See what happens when you open Pandora's box—all these ugly things come out."

In a sense, the public is now hearing bits and pieces of a discreet war that has gone on secretly within the CIA for nearly two decades. Epstein's book, in particular, described in extraordinary detail the long debate between the CIA's counterintelligence shop under James J. Angleton and foreign intelligence officers such as Colby who thought Angleton's folks saw Red agents under every bed. Colby fired Angleton in 1975 and reorganized counterintelligence; the argument still rages over whether Colby's action crippled the agency's security or merely wiped out its paranoia.

This struggle originated in 1961 when a Soviet defector named Galitsin (code-named Stone) reported that

a "mole" had gained access into the agency's vital core. The search for the "mole" began in earnest complicated by other Russian defectors who followed, telling a bewildering series of contradictory stories.

While counterintelligence scrutinized each defector for hard truth, suspicions also were raised about fellow CIA officers. According to various sources, at least three officers of some rank have come under suspicion as "moles" at different times and, while the evidence did not convince the CIA that any of these men were disloyal, each case left a residue of ambiguity or continuing suspicion. Some people are still rattling those old skeletons.

In his memoirs, "Honorable Men," Colby described how the internal suspicions raised by counterintelligence officers "were actually hurting" the agency's ability to operate.

"One [officer] had come under suspicion through a gross leap in logic," Colby wrote. "A defector had remarked that the Soviets were in contact with a CIA officer in a particular city. By a process of elimination, suspicion had settled on this one. But absolutely no other evidence was ever found to support it, even after careful check. Nonetheless, the officer was sent off to a distant and dead-end post for a number of years as a result."

In any case, the bad bile between Angleton's admirers and Colby's contributors, a lot of the poison to the present atmosphere. So does the bad bile between Colby and Helms, who was convicted of lying to the Senate. Helms' friends feel the ex-director would never have faced this disgrace if Colby had handled the whole business of secrets differently.

In the short run, this new fear of "moles" may help attain some political objectives for various interests. The FBI is campaigning again for more agents to chase down Soviet spies. Opponents of the arms limitation talks are using this subject as yet another reason not to trust the Russians. The official intelligence community is fortified in its quest for stiffer secrecy restrictions. The climate of suspicion may help persuade Congress that, just as in the old days, it really doesn't want to know all of the dirty secrets after all.

In the long run, however, the "mole" theory also may damage the CIA, if it creates another layer of public paranoia about secret operations and agency trustworthiness.

Tape: DCI-17
Side: A
Start: 0+

15 JAN 1979

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